DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 139 187 EC 100 762

AUTHOR Feden, Preston D.
TITLE Training Habilitators of the Retarded: Project T.H.O.R.; A Viable Alternative to Traditional Courses for Pre-Service Teachers.
PUB DATE Apr 77
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at the Annual International Convention, The Council for Exceptional Children (55th, Atlanta, Georgia, April 11-15, 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Handicapped Children; *Mentally Handicapped; *Performance Based Teacher Education; Post Secondary Education; *Program Descriptions; Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS *Project THOR

ABSTRACT

Project THOR (Training Habilitators of the Retarded), a noncategorical competency based teacher training program, is described. The program is said to be developmentally oriented with emphasis on similarities as well as differences among children with labels. The inclusion of a series of vocational education modules into the program is described. (CL)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

P51
Session 193

ED139187

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

TRAINING HABILITATORS OF THE RETARDED:

PROJECT T.H.O.R.

A viable alternative to traditional courses for pre-service teachers

Preston D. Feden
Director,
Special Education
La Salle College
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Paper presented at the 55th International Convention of the Council for Exceptional Children, Atlanta, Georgia, April 14, 1977

EC100762

PROJECT THOR: A viable alternative to traditional courses for pre-service teachers.

In Pennsylvania, we have recently witnessed a change in certification standards for the preparation of pre-service special education teachers. A new "comprehensive certificate" has been approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. The new certificate, entitled Teaching the Mentally and/or Physically Handicapped, permits the holder to teach mentally retarded, physically handicapped, emotionally disturbed, learning disabled, and brain injured children.

Teacher training programs now face a new dilemma. Decisions must be made regarding the best possible methods of training the new "generic" special educators; for it is clear that along with de-emphasis on categorical labels for teaching children, we have entered an era that stresses "interrelated" approaches to training pre-service teachers of exceptional children.

La Salle College developed an undergraduate teacher training program in Special Education that was philosophically consistent with the changing trends in our field. The entire program is developmentally oriented, and coursework stresses similarities as well as differences among labelled children. Along with developmentally oriented coursework (i.e. perceptual-motor development, language development), we built a strong field com-

ponent into our program, to insure that students maintain contact with exceptional children throughout their entire training program. Thus, Freshmen are required to observe a number of facilities for handicapped children, Sophomores must spend 4 to 6 hours each week working as teacher aids, Juniors spend 2 to 4 hours each week working as tutors, and Seniors spend 30 weeks in what we now call our Professional Year. The Professional Year consists of student teaching, and also contains modules of instruction, particularly in methods, at a time when students seem to need these methods most immediately. The Professional Year insures that Seniors will have three 10 week student teaching experiences, one with each of the following "categories" of children--mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed/learning disabled, and physically handicapped. One of these placements will be with mildly handicapped youngsters, and one will be with severely handicapped youngsters. Also, one placement will be with older children (chronological age 12 or above), another will be with younger children (chronological age 12 or below).

Within the context of a liberal arts college, it is readily apparent that, along with the traditional liberal arts courses that students must take, there is not sufficient time in four years to provide a large number of methods courses and essential field experiences. Most colleges have difficulty providing what their faculty would consider to be sufficient courses and experiences to train competent teachers. Thus, it behooves all teacher edu-

cators to make the most efficient use of our students' four years of training.

Competency-based or Performance-based education is becoming ever more popular, and one of its major objectives can be useful to us in providing the coursework necessary to insure minimal competencies among our generically trained pre-service teachers. By defining "competency clusters," or groups of competencies that relate to one another, modules of instruction can be developed to more efficiently develop those generic special educator's role competencies deemed necessary for graduating teachers to possess. Rather than perpetuating the traditional system of adding traditional courses onto the existing curriculum, these modules can be used to individualize instruction or to develop mini-courses of instruction that get at only the most important competencies in any specified aspect of teaching.

Project THOR is an example of the way in which competencies can be attained by pre-service teachers within the parameters of existing courses and field experiences.

With increased emphasis on Vocational Education, not only for the retarded but for a number of other handicapped and non-handicapped youngsters as well, we at La Salle felt that it was necessary to provide all pre-service students with competence in this area. Since it was not practical, or even possible to initiate an entire course in Vocational Education in our program (although it is acknowledged that at the graduate level some students might

pursue this area of special education), we sought the advice of the staff of Project THOR on how best to develop these competencies among our students.

A series of modules, better described as a three session mini-course, was developed for us by the Project THOR staff. Using the judgment of these experts, the essential information about Vocational and Career Education for the Handicapped was identified, and then a series of sessions were conducted, concurrent with the Professional Year, so that our students could attain these competencies. The major areas of knowledge, as defined by the Project THOR staff, included: (1) Motion-Time-Measurement, (2) Jigs and Fixtures, (3) Vocational Education, (4) Normalization, (5) Sex Education, (6) Task Analysis, and (7) Sheltered Workshops.

To implement this mini-course, students were pre-tested to determine their entry level competencies. Then, a series of lectures, discussions and activities were held for three Friday afternoons, with required field experiences and activities held between sessions. Examples of these experiences and activities include a visitation to a sheltered workshop and construction of a jig, among others. At the conclusion of the mini-course, students were post-tested to determine exit level of competencies. A criterion of 70% was set as the minimal passing grade on the post-test. Students not meeting this criterion were required to review handouts, readings, etc., and retake the test until the criterion was met.

The results for the 1976-1977 academic year were encouraging. The pre-test mean for the students on the competency test was 45.07%. The post-test mean was 82%. Only four students out of 37 failed the post-test and were required to do additional work to meet the criteria.

Student reactions to this method of developing competence was very positive.

During a time when the emphasis is shifting towards non-categorical teacher education programs and the preparation of generically trained pre-service teachers, we have found Project THOR provides us with the expertise and guidance necessary to provide the most essential and up-to-date Vocational Education experiences for the efficient training of our undergraduate pre-service teachers. More importantly, the model upon which Project THOR is based, and the way in which other projects might be utilized to serve pre-service teachers, holds a great deal of promise for enabling colleges to keep the core curriculum manageable, while at the same time providing students with the latest information on rapidly developing specialized areas in our field.